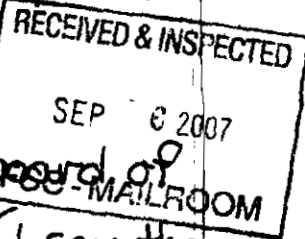


August 29, 2007

06-121

DEAR Mr. Copps -

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED



I so appreciate your efforts on the FCC Board of Governors; consolidation of media ownership. (I saw the Bill Moyers interview).

ORIGINAL

Cincinnati is a city that is down to one daily paper. Not that it was ever a strong pillar of the Fourth ESTATE but the Cincinnati Enquirer reached a lawsuit settlement where they can only report good news about Chiquita. P&G pulls strings all over the country... large advertiser. (Please read Alicia Sweeney's, "Soap Opera")

We have a handful of über wealthy - think KARL KINDNER of Chiquita & American Financial, Wm. Williams of WESTERN Southern, and Mercer REYNOLDS - planned the president's inaugural party.

Please look into this reporters dismissal. I really expect reporting to be more than retyping the press release.

Thank you,  
Debra Simpson  
4288 Ashland  
Norwood, OH  
45212

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# news

## Too Tough for The Enquirer?

Aggressive business reporter gets canned

BY LEW MOORES

**J**im McNair, an award-winning business reporter at *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, was summoned to the human resources office at the paper Aug. 16 and fired. Blogs blazed with the news within days.

NewsAche, a local blog devoted entirely to pointing out journalistic deficiencies at *The Enquirer*, suggested he was "fired to placate advertisers." Bill Slout, a former *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter who writes *The Daily Bellwether* blog, called McNair a "pain in the ass" newsman, who could be a prickly pear and would poke his nose into uncomfortable places — like the banking industry and home-builders.

The reporter, who, during just a half-dozen years, confronted pension fraud, homebuilders, Check 'N Go, Berkeley Prudential Insurance and Fifth Third Bank (among others) was told by Carolyn Pione, *Enquirer* business editor, that there had been complaints about him about his tone, attitude and professionalism. He was terminated.

McNair says he wasn't told who complained or the nature of those complaints. While he wouldn't speculate about whether he was fired to "placate advertisers," he concedes his wasn't exactly an accommodating face in corporate Cincinnati.

McNair spoke with *CityBeat* before his attorney told him not to speak further with the media.

### 'Scalding water'

"I've passed off a lot of companies," McNair says. "The complaints caused them enough consternation that they decided I was more trouble than I was worth. But we never had to correct anything, clarify or retract. It's just that they didn't have the stomach for it."

McNair's letter of termination, he confirmed, said, "In light of recent complaints, our confidence that you could improve in this regard... to report in a fair and balanced manner... was severely shaken."

Indeed, in what has turned out to be a prescient piece of reporting, McNair wrote in a 2002 Nieman Foundation report about the lengths corporate America would go to to block business reporters. He cited several examples of corporations going straight to employers and asking that stories be killed or reporters reassigned.

"Reporters who confront corporations might as well be covering the affairs of a medieval king sequestered behind castle walls and a moat," McNair wrote. "Corporations are not like city halls, county courthouses or state assemblies where information is harvested freely by reporters. Efforts to seal the castle wall... often end in a dosing of scalding water, usually administered by the corporate executive whose job it is to keep the news media in check."

McNair, who is 51 and married with three children, was



Jim McNair says he doesn't know why *The Enquirer* fired him. He was told complaints were behind the dismissal, but wasn't told what the complaints were — or who made them.

recruited by *The Enquirer* from *The Miami Herald*, where he covered large corporations in South Florida, writing scathing stories about scams and covering white collar crime. In 2001, McNair says, *Enquirer* Executive Editor Ward Busher told him, "You can't have a good newspaper without a good business section."

"So I did what they hired me to do," McNair says.

That philosophy changed with a changing of regimes, and the complaints apparently grew louder that year. But those complaints didn't involve a history of inaccuracies, corrections or retractions. There were never any suggestions of plagiarism, fabrication, conflicts of interest or pay offs. There were no intimations of sexual harassment or computer porn. Just "complaints."

*The Enquirer* wouldn't say why McNair was fired.

"Unfortunately, we cannot comment on personnel decisions," Hollis Towns, *Enquirer* executive editor, told *CityBeat* in an e-mail. But Towns did tell *Editor & Publisher* that the newspaper didn't do it to appease advertisers. He told the magazine that allegation was "completely unfounded. We make news decisions that are completely independent."

Not everyone complained, of course. Mary Benfield, who lives in Pierce Township and is involved in a lawsuit with a homebuilder, says she appreciated stories McNair had done on shoddy home construction.

"He was working on poor house building," she says. "He made me feel like he was somebody speaking up for

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